

Message Text

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TO SECSTATE WASHDC 1293

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SUBJ: MALAYSIAN REACTION TO SEIZURE OF EGYPTIAN EMBASSY IN

MADRID AND LATEST EGYPT/ISRAEL INTERIM ACCORD

1. TWO PROMINENT KUALA LUMPUR DAILIES CARRIED EDITORIALS

SEPT 17 COMMENTING ON SEIZURE OF EGYPTIAN EMBASSY IN MADRID BY
PALESTINIAN GUNMEN AND CRITICIZING EGYPT FOR BREAKING RANKS WITH
OTHER ARAB NATIONS IN SIGNING LATEST INTERIM SINAI ACCORD
WITH ISRAEL

2. GOVERNMENT INFLUENCED ENGLISH LANGUAGE DAILY "NEW STRAITS

TIMES" (NST - WHOSE READERSHIP INCLUDES MORE SOPHISTICATED
MALAYSIAN AND FOREIGN COMMUNITY) IN EDIT ENTITLED "EGYPT FIRST"
DESCRIBES EMBASSY SEIZURE AS "MOST DRAMATIC MANIFESTATION OF THE
ARAB SPLIT ON THE INTERIM SETTLEMENT." NST CONTENDS THAT
"ALTHOUGH CAIRO CANNOT BUT REMAIN A HEAVYWEIGHT IN THE
MIDDLE EAST, THE ACCORD PROBABLY MARKS THE END OF EGYPTIAN
LEADERSHIP OF THE ARAB WORLD, FREELY YEILDED BY PRESIDENT
SADAT IN HIS PURSUIT OF A POLICY WHICH PUTS EGYPTIAN BEFORE
PAN-ARAB INTERESTS." EDIT CITES BOTH EGYPT'S AND OTHER
ARAB NATIONS' POINTS OF VIEW IN CURRENT DEBATE,
CONCLUDING THAT THE "SECOND INTERIM AGREEMENT IN THE

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SINAI IS ONLY JUSTIFIABLE IF IT IS A STEPPING STONE TO PEACE"

WITH SYRIA, JORDAN AND PALESTINIANS OVER GOLAN HEIGHTS, JORDAN'S WEST BANK, "LEGITIMATE RIGHTS OF THE PALESTINIAN PEOPLE," AND JERUSALEM.

3. ARABIC SCRIPT MALAY LANGUAGE DAILY "UTUSAN MELAUY" (WHICH IS OWNED BY DOMINANT GOVERNMENT PARTY - UMNO OR UNITED MALAYS NATIONS ORGANIZATION - AND APPEALS PRIMARILY TO MORE RELIGIOUSLY CONSERVATIVE AND FUNDAMENTALIST MUSLIM ELEMENTS OF POPULACE) TOOK HARDER LINE. IN COMMENTARY ENTITLED "ARAB DISUNITY?", "UTUSAN MELAYU" ARGUED THAT "EGYPT SHOULD HAVE REALIZED THE BAD CONSEQUENCE OF HER AGREEMENT WITH ISRAEL. INDEED ALL PARTIES WANTED A PEACEFUL SETTLEMENT, BUT ANY SETTLEMENT REACHED SHOULD NOT DISREGARD AND ENDANGER OTHER ARAB COUNTRIES." EDIT CONCLUDED WITH WARNING THAT "EGYPT SHOULD ALSO BE WARY OF ANY U.S. STEP THROUGH HENRY KISSINGER. THE POLICY OF 'DIVIDE AND RULE' HAS BEEN USED SUCCESSFULLY BY VARIOUS COLONIAL POWERS IN THE PAST, AND IT WAS HOPED THAT EGYPT WOULD NOT FALL VICTIM TO THIS POLICY AND BECOME A SOURCE OF DISUNITY THAT WOULD BE A LOSS TO ALL ARABS."

3. FULL SUMMARIES SENT DEPARTMENT AND USIA
SEPTEL.

4. COMMENT: EGYPTIAN DIPLOMATS HERE HAVE TOLD US THAT GOM OFFICIALS HAVE COMMENTED FAVORABLY ON INTERIM SETTLEMENT IN CONVERSATIONS WITH THEM. THESE EDITORIALS INDICATE, HOWEVER, THAT THERE ARE SOME ELEMENTS CLOSE TO THE GOVERNMENT WHO ARE NOT VERY ENTHUSIASTIC ABOUT EGYPT'S ACTION IN CONCLUDING A SEPARATE, ALBEIT INTERIM, ACCORD.
UNDERHILL

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